

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)**ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 142 (2014) 800 – 803

**Procedia**  
Social and Behavioral Sciences

CIEA 2014

## Law Benchmarks Regarding Adult Education during Spiru Haret's ministry mandate. Achieving a Goal

Andreea Neculau<sup>a\*</sup>, Adelina Chelariu<sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup> „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, 11 Carol I Blvd, Iasi, 700506, Romania

---

### Abstract

The present study aims at emphasizing Spiru Haret's indisputable contribution to the reform of the educational system of his time. The great minister, as he was often called by Nicolae Iorga, Spiru Haret can be considered a true creator of law, institutions and educational system. His reform was not always free from contradictions, but remains a landmark in the evolution of valuable modern Romanian education. The Minister of Cults and Public Instruction for almost 10 years, having three mandates, mathematician and educator with a strong love for his country, his principles, law and institutional projects emphasize the primary role of the school in the history and development of a country. The educational system represents the area in which Haret distinguished himself through the contribution he brought in order to develop a reform legislation in a period of time dominated by social insecurity and illiteracy. The wish to educate the masses, highly necessary for the Romanian society of the time, was his priority in his educational activity and principles and which can be also identified in the space of the Popular Universities, anticipation of the later called “lifelong learning”. In order to fight the plague of illiteracy and lack of culture which was noticeable especially in the area of villages, Spiru Haret, being aware of the role of education in personal and social development set up courses for adults, organized especially during his third minister mandate (12 March 1907 and 28 December 1910). During the reform period that we are going through, with deep social and institutional changes, the study invites to a historical retrospective out of which we have to learn to extract, considering the particularities of that period, valuable elements, human and action models from a period that deserves all our attention and which offers initiatives and strategies displaying a remarkable modernism.

© 2014 Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University.

**Keywords:** reform, popular universities, adult education, lifelong learning, educational system

---

---

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [andreea.neculau@yahoo.com](mailto:andreea.neculau@yahoo.com)

Spiru Haret remains undoubtedly the emblematic figure of great reforms which characterize the Romanian educational system. As a conservative protector of authentic values, of national identities but, at the same time, as a real innovator and reformer, he anticipates a real strategy meant to align the Romanian school to the developed countries. Driven by a real vocation, a strong, insightful will and an eternal love for his country, Spiru Haret combined the traditional and the modern in order to create an authentic and innovative culture.

“The great minister”, as Nicolae Iorga called him, claimed that the educational system of a nation represented the main drive in the development of a people’s culture. School completes the development and the character of an individual; it manages to change the disciples’ destinies thanks to teachers, to provide new insights and to serve the interests of the country. With a PhD in Paris, where he had the opportunity to observe the way other educational systems functioned, and with a real talent for teaching, Spiru Haret refused to implement and to adapt other reforms except for those which corresponded to and were suitable for the concrete reality of our country.

A promoter of exigency in education, the figure who was for 10 years the Minister of Religion and Public Education, Haret was the protector of the teachers but at the same time he required that they should have complex training by constantly attending continual educational training of the time. Through his reforms and his revolutionary thinking, his focus was the multilateral development of the student on an intellectual, moral, physical as well as on an aesthetical level, while the priority was the patriotic education; his ideal was the establishment of a unitary and harmonious education system in the whole country and among all walks of life. Thanks to him, at the end of 1909, the total number of literate people increased to 39.4 %, which means that, during the 10 years of reforms, the percentage rose by 17%; among the people living in rural areas, the percentage increased by 19%. Thus, some of the objectives that “great Haret” had were: compulsory and free of charge primary education first of all, equal education between children from towns and villages, education of young people and adults in a patriotic and work-loving spirit, continual training of teachers, development of vocational education, development of education according to the needs and realities of that time.

Haret, *the forerunner of the political life during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century* (Eugen Orghidan, 1994), pointed out that the teacher, especially the one in rural areas, had a duty to fight for the improvement of the financial situation of the peasants but also to help in the process of their training and education. His or her love for work, self-confidence, discipline and order, the initiative in work and the spirit of mutual help were key elements that had to be instilled to the villagers.

Among the issues dealt with by Spiru Haret, an important role had the extracurricular activity of the teachers whose main purpose was the cultural and material development of the Romanian people; thus, he is considered the forerunner of social pedagogy and especially of adults’ pedagogy. In 1904, *the Regulations of the schools for adults* came into force, which was developed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education, and according to which teachers became the key element of the sittings for adults.

In the informative note no. 43226 that was sent to prefects for setting up the courses for adults, he announced that the course duration would be two hours a week and that they would be held only if there were at least five auditors in urban areas and at least ten auditors in rural areas. In order that they took place, they needed the authorization of the inspectorate and of the minister, and the accredited people who could teach these courses were active teachers or schoolmasters. It is worth mentioning that, prior to Haret, teachers’ work, and especially those in rural areas, was not truly and wholly appreciated, so his purpose was to increase the value of villages so as not to create a gap between village life and city life.

Therefore, it was proposed that extracurricular activities should be conducted on two levels: cultural and economic. In terms of culture, the reference was made to: organizing various courses for adults, village sittings and cultural circles that would be the place where teachers would hold practical conferences for villagers, cultural centres, libraries as well as periodicals for villagers. In fact, from an economic perspective, the focus was the establishment of village communities, of popular banks and of village cooperatives in order to raise the living standards in rural areas.

For Spiru Haret, “*the soldier of the enlightened populism, the cultural and public activity of teachers represented the essential tool in improving the moral and the material level of the peasantry* (\*\*\*Marea Rascoala a taranilor din 1907, 1967).

Haret relied on the special contribution that the rural teaching staff could bring so as to improve the situation of the peasants, as he himself said “the teaching staff has the largest number: the members are spread throughout the

country, as far as the most hidden and remote places. Just like the roots of a strong tree, the teaching staff extends its ramifications everywhere, penetrating all the walks of life of the nation and mingling with them, and this is its certain and invaluable advantage (Haret, 1900).

As designed by Spiru Haret, the extracurricular activities became a reality after 1900, with relevant activities between 1901 and 1904. Haret thought the extracurricular activities should be led by teachers so as to eliminate the lack of knowledge and especially the illiteracy; the people who had attended four primary classes used to forget, in time, what they had learnt. Thus, at a national level, he introduced the courses for adults among the extracurricular activities, which were set by well-established regulations.

According to the Decision no. 10825 of February 21<sup>st</sup>, 1902 for the organization of cultural circles, the teachers in 9 schools formed a cultural group, namely the cultural circle. "The president" was the teacher whom the school inspector named in charge of the well-functioning of the cultural circles and from whom the latter got frequent feedback on the functioning of the circle. The main purpose of the circle was widening the scope of knowledge of teachers to convey practical knowledge on agriculture and other matters. These circles were responsible for organizing public conferences on various topics, such as: "The evils arising from idleness, prodigality, lying; noble feelings: love for the good, religious feeling and, especially, love for the country; home hygiene, clothing, food, consequences of alcoholism; taking care of cattle; growing trees; growing vine; growing basic-need vegetables, taking care of bees (Works of Spiru Haret, II). Besides these topics, teachers were asked to use simple language that all villagers could understand. Following these conferences held by teachers, the work "Popular conferences held by rural teachers" appeared under the careful guidance and supervision of George Cosbuc.

In 1908, Spiru Haret sent an informative note requiring teachers to hold conferences on the topic of alcoholism and its effects, which were considered to be an important variable in increasing the welfare of the villages, and, a few years later, he sent another note requiring teachers to debate on the theme of gambling. In a letter sent to bishops, the priests were required to join teachers in order to improve the condition of the villagers.

Another recommendation made by Haret was the foundation of cultural libraries near schools or within schools, where teachers should organize school celebrations insisting on the village theatre scenes as well as sittings. To create the library, Haret founded the "Star" society, which had to print popularizing books. One of Spiru Haret's qualities is that he encouraged the initiatives of teachers, who often exceeded the minimal requirements and did much more elaborate things.

In time, the reforms imposed during Spiru Haret's ministry proved to be necessary. Those reforms were the most realistic, full of substance, adaptable to Romania's concrete situation at that time; they were meant to establish a quality system that should persist over centuries, to revive the village activities, to provide a new perspective on the country he loved so much.

Therefore, the *great minister* offered a new cultural side to Romania, a dimension we have to honour and value so that the reforms should go further.

## References

- \*\*\* (1967) *Marea Rascoala a taranilor din 1907*, Edit. Academiei.
- Adamescu Gh. (1936) *Viața și activitatea lui Spiru Haret*, București: Cartea Românească.
- Haret C. Spiru, (1897) *Cestiuni de învățământ*, București: Institutul de Arte Grafice Carol Gobl. 1897.
- Lăudat, Ion D. (1976) *Două personalități ale veacului nostru: Spiru Haret îndrumătorul școlii românești și Vasile Pîrvan sau cultul muncii*, Iași, Editura Universitatea.
- Lui Spiru C. Haret, (1911) *"Ale tale dintru ale tale", la împlinirea celor 40 de ani*, București: Carol Gobl.
- Neculau Adrian, (1994) *Pedagogie Socială*, Iași, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”.
- Neculau, Bogdan Constantin, (2005) *Seminarul Pedagogic al Universității Al. I. Cuza din Iași (1898-1948) - pagini de istorie*, în „Educația - provocări la început de mileniu. Omagiu profesorului Teodor Cozma”, Iași: Editura Universității „Al. I. Cuza”.
- Operele lui Spiru Haret*, vol I, Oficiale, 1884-1888, 1897-1899; Oficiale, vol II, 1901-1904; Oficiale Vol III 1907-1910; Parlamentare, vol IV 1895-1899; Polemice și Politice, vol IX, 1911-1912; Parlamentare vol V 1901-1904; Parlamentare, vol VI, 1907-1911; Polemice și Politice, vol VII, 1887-1900; Polemice și Politice, vol VIII, 1905-1907; Operele științifice, vol X, 1878-1912; Scrisori, vol XI, Iași: Editura Tipomoldova, 2009.

Orăscu Șerban (1976) *Spiru Haret*, București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.

Orghidan Eugen (1994) *Spiru C. Haret-reformator al învățământului românesc*, București: Editura Media Publishing.

Spiru, Haret, (1900) Societatea corpului didactic primar și liga învățământului în "Convorbiri didactice" VI nr. 7-8 din august-septembrie.